

Fox News, 21st Century Fox Settle Discrimination Suits With 18 Ex-Employees

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Fox News and its parent company 21st Century Fox [FOX +0.12%](#) said they have reached settlements with 18 former employees of the news channel who had filed lawsuits that included allegations of racial and gender discrimination.

Terms of the settlements weren't disclosed, but a person familiar with the matter said the cases were settled for around \$10 million. There are no nondisclosure agreements as part of the settlements, the person said.

The first suit, filed in March 2017 in New York state court, was brought by two black women who worked in the payroll department at Fox News. They alleged that they were subject to racial slurs and insults by their superior and that they were subjected to a hostile work environment.

Other employees from payroll and accounting subsequently joined the suit, as did Kelly Wright, an on-air personality. Mr. Wright argued that discrimination based on his race had kept him from advancing at the network. Mr. Wright is leaving the network.

"Kelly Wright has informed Fox News of his desire to pursue new opportunities," Mr. Wright said in a statement. "He thanks Fox News and wishes it well as he moves forward to the next phase of his career."

Fox News and the employment law firm of Wigdor Law LLP, which represented the plaintiffs, separately released similar statements Tuesday, saying: "The parties have reached mutual agreements that resolve various cases involving former Fox News employees."

Individual defendants included Judith Slater, a former comptroller of Fox News who was fired last year in the wake of some of these complaints. She has denied wrongdoing. Fox News's executive vice president of legal and business affairs, Dianne Brandi, was also a defendant in the suit. Ms. Brandi, who also denied wrongdoing, has been on a voluntary personal leave of absence from the company since October.

The discrimination suits came in the wake of the sexual-harassment scandal at Fox News that led to the ousters of Roger Ailes, the late former Fox News chief executive, and prime-time star Bill O'Reilly. Some of the women who accused the men of sexual harassment were paid settlements. Messrs. Ailes and O'Reilly each denied wrongdoing.

After an initial harassment suit was filed against Mr. Ailes by former on-air talent Gretchen Carlson, the network worked with a law firm to conduct a probe into the workplace environment at the network and to investigate additional claims. 21st Century Fox has paid

tens of millions in settlements related to harassment suits and other workplace complaints in the past two years.

Last November, 21st Century Fox created the “Fox News Workplace Professionalism and Inclusion Council” as part of its efforts to address concerns about the work environment inside Fox News. The council was created as part of a settlement with a shareholder who accused the company of breaching fiduciary duty by failing to address the “hostile work environment” at Fox News.

The Wigdor firm has represented many employees in their legal claims against the network and parent company. The U.S.-based firm also tried to derail 21st Century Fox’s efforts to acquire the 61% of European pay TV company Sky PLC that the media company doesn’t already own.

Douglas Wigdor, a partner at the firm, met with British regulators last year in an effort to argue that 21st Century Fox didn’t meet the standards to hold broadcast licenses in the U.K. Fox pushed back hard against that assessment. The U.K. regulators decided that Fox meets broadcasting standards, but they have yet to announce whether Fox’s takeover proposal won’t hurt competition, the second factor needed to allow the deal.

21st Century Fox is selling the lion’s share of its entertainment assets to Walt Disney Co. in a \$52.4 billion deal that is pending. Fox News isn’t part of that sale and will remain with other assets that would form a new company.

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